

The Skagit Flyer

Skagit Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

www.skagitaudubon.org

Vol. 33 No. 3

MARCH FIELD TRIPS

By Libby Mills

About the field trips

Beginning birders and their friends are always welcome on Skagit Audubon field trips. Membership in Skagit Audubon is encouraged but not required for participation. Please be prepared for the weather with suitable clothing, and bring field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes. Carpool whenever possible and contribute to the driver's expense. Watch the email reminders for the latest information, including any changes and/or additions to the field trip schedule. To be added to the email distribution list contact Libby Mills:

libbymills@gmail.com

If you plan to join a field trip some place other than the described starting point, call the trip leader the day before to ensure a successful rendezvous. Trip plans may change.

Saturday, March 1 Samish Flats & Beyond 8:00 a.m. to Noon

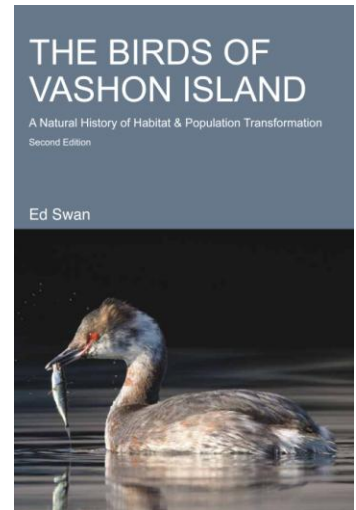
Join us as we explore birds of prey and waterfowl country as winter birding begins to come to an end. We will start with a quick uplands exploration of Padilla Bay interpretive center

Field Trips continue on page 6

MARCH MEETING AND PROGRAM

Vashon Island: Citizen Science and Habitat Change By Ed Swan

Tuesday, Mar. 11, 2014
7:00 Social; 7:30 Program
Padilla Bay Interpretive Center
10441 Bayview-Edison Road
Mt. Vernon, Washington



Naturalist, author and guide Ed Swan, will discuss the effects of habitat change on bird populations in the Puget Sound area. He will cover habitat change on Vashon Island since settlement in the late 1800s and the resulting alterations in bird populations. Old-growth coniferous forest that almost completely covered the island was entirely cut within about thirty years. Farmland replaced forest, bringing many new bird species. Farmers created ponds and introduced game birds. Deciduous re-growth around clearing edges, and recovery of forests as farming decreased, completed a total habitat make-over of the island.

In the 1990s citizen science efforts began to track these changes and to identify habitat with important wildlife values. Over the next twenty years citizens acted to preserve the most important and critical habitat on Vashon. A database of over 7,000 records from local observers, plus 15 years of Christmas Bird Counts and 14 years of Breeding Bird Surveys, provide a particularly robust baseline for protecting habitat and wildlife and for guiding discussions about land use issues.



SKAGIT AUDUBON

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Gull Eating Clam

Photo by Joe Halton

MEMBERSHIP/SUBSCRIPTIONS

General membership meetings of the Skagit Audubon Society are held at the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center, 1043 Bayview-Edison Rd., Mt. Vernon, WA—7:00 PM Social/ 7:30 PM Program—on the second Tuesday of each month, September through June. The board of directors meets at the same location at 7:00 PM on the first Tuesday of each month.

Skagit Audubon Society (SAS) membership provides a local chapter affiliation and newsletter, **The Flyer**, for individuals who want all their funds to benefit their local chapter. Newsletters from additional chapters can be sought by contacting their websites and membership chairs from links at www.audubon.org/states/wa/. **To join Skagit Audubon Society** please use the form below.

National Audubon Society (NAS) membership is separate from SAS membership and includes Audubon magazine. National Audubon membership does not provide Skagit Audubon membership; however, NAS will assign you an affiliation with a local chapter. To change your chapter assignment call 800-274-4201. **To join National Audubon Society** use the form below.

Skagit Audubon Society is a Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Skagit Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual membership in the Skagit Audubon Society includes 10 issues of our newsletter, *The Skagit Flyer*, available on our website. Membership includes all members of your household.

\$20 one (1) year \$40 two (2) years

I wish to donate \$ _____ to Skagit Audubon Society.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____ Email _____

Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:

Skagit Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1101
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-1101

Please do not share my personal information with National Audubon Society. (It is the policy of SAS not to share information with any other groups.)

Using the form below to initially join the **National Audubon Society** will ensure that the **Skagit Audubon** chapter receives a cost share to support local programs.

National Audubon Society Membership Form

Annual membership to the National Audubon Society includes a subscription to *Audubon* magazine. Membership includes all members of your household.

\$20 for one-year introductory membership with one chapter affiliation

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____

Clip form/Mail to/Payable to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center Y21
P.O. Box 422246-2246
Palm Coast, FL 32142
www.audubon.org

For members receiving a paper copy of The Skagit Flyer, the mailing label includes your membership expiration date in the upper right corner. If that date is highlighted in orange it is a reminder that your membership is about to or has expired. All other members will receive an email notice when their membership is about to expire. The Skagit Flyer is published monthly from September through June. Unsolicited material for the next month's Flyer should be sent to the editor by the third Saturday of the current month. For questions or problems about your Skagit Flyer subscription, contact membership chair: Sheila Pera, skagitmembers@gmail.com



SKAGIT AUDUBON MARCH CONSERVATION REPORT

By TIM MANNS, CONSERVATION CHAIR

It's easy to fill pages describing conservation issues from local to national, all needing our attention. With more all the time, it's equally easy to become discouraged. Being engaged citizens communicating our ideas and opinions to elected officials and agency staff eases discouragement but often isn't enough. Fortunately, we live in a place where groups and organizations have sprung up all around to learn about the environment and act to restore and protect it. Sometimes a person needs to just get out and encounter the real, solid world at first hand: plant trees, record bird data, tend a garden, help kids learn about and experience the natural world. I'm taking a break here from enumerating issues and instead will list a few of the opportunities to make a difference close to home, however small and incremental, out in the world beyond politics, big corporations, and doomsday reports. Many of you already volunteer with these and other causes. Thank you!

At Skagit Audubon meetings there are frequent reasons to mention Skagit Land Trust, founded by Audubon members. In 22 years of existence this non-profit has protected thousands of ecologically significant acres in Skagit County. Contributing to and volunteering with Skagit Land Trust always makes us feel better. See the Trust's website for upcoming work parties to plant trees, remove alien plants, census amphibians. Adopt a Land Trust property as a long-term volunteer land steward (skagitlandtrust.org/)

Salmon have been central to what the Northwest is about since the continental ice sheet retreated, and they're in trouble. With the help of many volunteers, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group works on that challenge by restoring riparian areas, counting salmon, and much more. See SFEG's schedule of well-organized volunteer work events. (skagitfisheries.org/)

Skagit Conservation District offers a bunch of programs combining education with volunteer service: the Backyard Wildlife Habitat program, Stream Team (gathering water quality data), Watershed Masters, Marine Biotoxins Monitoring program, and more. First you learn, then you go out and do interesting work to make a difference. (skagitcd.org/)

Washington Native Plant Society's Salal Chapter maintains a demonstration garden by the WSU Research Station. Volunteering here, you help showcase and encourage use of native plants in gardening, benefiting wildlife and the environment generally. (wnps.org/salal/volunteer.htm)

Skagit County Marine Resources Committee offers two programs for volunteers to learn about the marine environment, work on related projects, and help educate the public: Salish Sea Stewards and Beach naturalists. Training is coming right up. See skagitmrc.org/ now.

WSU Skagit County Beach Watchers 100 hour training about Puget Sound and related environmental issues is also soon to begin. Applications are due right after this newsletter hits the stands. (beachwatchers.wsu.edu/skagit/)

Check out Trail Tales, a volunteer-based project of Friends of Skagit Beaches (skagitbeaches.org/). And the public land managing agencies in our area all offer volunteer opportunities: multiple state parks, North Cascades National Park, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and more. There are many ways to volunteer for Skagit Audubon too!

You may long ago have read T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Do you recall the advice Merlin gives for dealing with sadness, or we might add, discouragement? Though put in Merlin's mouth, it's not magic: "Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn." Yes, learning, and then putting it into action. That's the thing to do.



This column reports submitted sightings. Any rare sightings should be accompanied by detailed written documentation and if possible a photograph. A second person to verify rare sightings is extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to call any observer to help document unusual sightings. Also do not hesitate to call if you need clarification on locations.

Please submit your sightings to **Pam Pritzl**
ppritzl@frontier.com or **360-387-7024**.

WATERFOWL

Greater White-fronted Goose 1 on Bayview-Edison Rd by north 90 on 2-9 (AW)

Cackling Goose 40 flying over Highway 9/College Way on 1-25 (PP)

Trumpeter Swan about 200 regularly seen in farm field on Camano Island (RP)



LOONS

Common Loon 1 at Big Lake on 2-9 (GB)

**Common Loon
Winter**

Photo by Joe Halton

RAPTORS

Bald Eagle 140 feasting on pig carcass in field off West Edison Rd on 2-9 (AW)

Cooper's Hawk 2 adult at Merritt's apple orchard on Bayview-Edison Rd on 2-8 (AW)

Red-tailed Hawk 1 juvenile "Harlan's" on Chuckanut Rd on 1-25 (AW); 1 "Harlan's" on Estes/Chuckanut Rd on 2-1 (AW); 1 "Harlan's" on Estes Rd on 2-9 (AW)

Rough-legged Hawk 1 dark morph male on Colony/Chuckanut Rds on 2-9 (AW)

American Kestrel 1 on Chuckanut Rd on 2-1 (AW); 1 on Estes Rd on 2-8 (AW)

Peregrine Falcon 1 on wire near West Edison Rd on 2-8 (AW); 1 near Rhody Café on 2-8 (AW); 1 on Estes Rd on 2-9 (AW)

RAILS

Virginia Rail 1 at Skagit Game Range on 2-8 (GB)

SHOREBIRDS

Lesser Yellowlegs 1 at Skagit Game Range on 2-8 (GB) **rare in winter**

Western Sandpiper 1 at March Point on 2-8 (GB)

Least Sandpiper 1 at March Point on 2-8 (GB)

Wilson's Snipe 1 at corner of Bow Rd and Chuckanut Rd on 2-8 (AW); 1 at Telegraph Slough on 2-8 (GB)

OWLS

Barn Owl 1 at Port Susan Bay on 1-26 (SAS)

Short-eared Owl 3 at Eide Rd on 1-26 (SAS)

HUMMINGBIRDS

Anna's Hummingbird 1 in Lyman on 2-8 (GB)

WOODPECKERS

Red-breasted Sapsucker 1 at Camano Island home on 1-21 (PP)

SHRIKES

Northern Shrike 1 at Jensen Access on 2-1 (GB)

PIPITS

American Pipit flock on Sullivan Rd on 1-25 (AW)

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler 1 near Hillcrest Park, Mt. Vernon, throughout the period (TM)

Yellow-rumped Warbler 2 "Audubon's" at Skagit Game Range on 2-1 (GB)

Townsend's Warbler 1 at Mt. Vernon suet feeder on 2-11 (BE)

Northern Waterthrush 1 at Skagit Game Range on 2-8 (GB)

SPARROWS

Savannah Sparrow 4 on the Samish Flats on 1-18 (GB)

Swamp Sparrow 2 at Skagit Game Range on 2-1 (GB)

White-throated Sparrow 1 near S. 9th & Broadway, Mt. Vernon on 2-6 (TM)



**White-throated
Sparrow**

Photo by Joe Halton

BLACKBIRDS

Western Meadowlark 6 at Eide Road on 1-26 (SAS)

FINCHES

Pine Siskin 1 at Camano Island home on 1-19 & 1-20 (PP)

MAMMALS

River Otter 1 in small lake near Concrete (JP)

(GB) Gary Bletsch; (BE) Beth Edwards; (TM) Tim Manns; (JP) Josh Parrott; (RP) Ron Pera; (PP) Pam Pritzl; (SAS) Skagit Audubon Field Trip; (AW) Andrea Warner



Four hikes are scheduled for March. Unexpected circumstances such as unforeseen trail problems, weather, predictions of heavy rain and/or wind, snow, ice, low wind chills, landslides, floods, logging, construction, or road conditions may cause cancellations or changes in the following hikes. If you have questions or want information on any of the hikes, call **JOAN MELCHER, 360-424-0407**, or e-mail jdmelcher@comcast.net. All the hikes are on a Wednesday. Dogs are discouraged on Audubon-sponsored hikes. If dogs are on a hike, they must be on a leash at all times.

***Starred hikes require a Washington State Discover Pass for parking your vehicle.**

WED. – MARCH 5 – THE TOMMY THOMPSON TRAIL (The TTT)

Walk on the Tommy Thompson Trail in Anacortes from the Cap Sante Marina to the far end of the trestle on March Point (7.2 miles round trip) and, if desired, walk around part of March Point and back to Anacortes (up to 13 or more miles). Meet at 9 a.m. at the north end of the Marina near the restroom facility and Dock K. Walking shoes recommended. You may leave when you return to the starting point.

WED. – MARCH 12 – SUGAR CUBE AND WHISTLE LAKE

Terry Slotemaker or his designee will lead us on a hike in the Anacortes Forest Lands, which is 6.8 miles, with a 1,600 ft. elevation gain. There is also a 3.41 mile self-guided option around Whistle Lake. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Heart Lake parking lot off the Heart Lake Road south of Anacortes. You may leave when you return to the trailhead.

***WED. – MARCH 19 – GOOSE ROCK PERIMETER HIKE**

Hike a loop that includes Cranberry Lake, beaches, the south side of Deception Pass, Cornet Bay and a 450 foot climb up Goose Rock. The total elevation gain for the day is 750 feet. Meet at 9 a.m. in the east side parking lot at Cranberry Lake near the main entrance to Deception Pass State Park. There are 6.2 miles for the basic loop hike; add 4.0 miles if you hike on beach south to the naval station border (10.2 miles). You may leave when your car of people has returned to the trailhead.

A Discover Pass is required to park in the park.

WED. – MARCH 26 – AROUND MOUNT ERIE: Mount Erie Base Circumference Hike

Hike around the base of Mount Erie through forests.



On its south side are occasional views of lakes, straits, bays, passages and islands. Lots of ups and downs for a 1,300 ft. elevation gain. The loop is 6.3 miles or 6.6 miles with a side trip to a Whistle Lake view. Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot at the Sugarloaf trailhead near the start of the Mt.

Erie Road off the Heart Lake Road located south of Anacortes. Estimated return time is 1:00 p.m. You may leave when you return to the trailhead.

There may be an option to hike up Mount Erie from the south side if a guide is available. Portions of this steep trail include minor scrambling.

WED. – APRIL 2 – LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

This trail is on the east side of Lookout Mountain above Lake Whatcom. It opened in 2013. The basic loop is 5.8 miles, which includes a side trail to a lookout. The elevation gain is 1,000 feet. Other available options include additional hiking above the Preserve and the Stimpson Family Nature Preserve. The trailhead is located a mile or so south of the Stimpson Family Nature Reserve on the Lake Louise Road. Whatcom County hikers should drive directly to the trailhead. Other hikers meet at the Chuckanut Drive Park-n-Ride in Burlington at 8:30 a.m. These people will drive to the trailhead by way of the Alger-Caine Lake Road, the South Lake Whatcom Boulevard, and the Lake Louise Road. We will meet at the trail head about 9 a.m.



and then work our way around Samish flats seeking white birds, fierce birds and the first of spring migrant arrivals. Dress for the weather. We will meet at Padilla Bay Interpretive Center parking lot to carpool. **Don't forget your Discover Pass.**

Leader: Libby Mills, 360-708-6975 or libbymills@gmail.com

**Saturday, March 8
Deception Pass State Park
8:30 a.m. to Around Noon**

This weekend we have a perfect tide for water birds in the food-rich waters of Deception Pass. Ivar Dolph will lead and meet us at March Point Park 'n Ride, at 8:30 a.m. We will carpool to the site to search for marine coastal birds in Washington's favorite state park. Bring a snack or lunch. Dress for wind and the cool coast.

Don't forget your Discover Pass.

Leader: Ivar Dolph, pidolph@frontier.com

**Saturday, March 15
Wings Over Water Northwest: Birding Festival
Blaine, Washington**

Wings Over Water Northwest Birding Festival celebrates winter migration of birds in the Pacific Northwest. Each year there is a great opportunity for birding and field trips. Go to the website for more information. www.blainechamber.com/wow/

**Saturday, March 22
Upriver Skagit Valley
8:00 a.m. to Early Afternoon**

Meet at Chuckanut Park and Ride to carpool to go up the Skagit Valley seeking early migrants such as Mountain Bluebirds. You never know about the weather or the birds, but this promises to be a fun trip. You never know about the weather or the birds, but this promises to be a fun trip.

Leader: Bob Kuntz, annebobkuntz@gmail.com

**Sunday, March 30
Fir Island Sites & Maynard Axelson's
Waterfowl Collection**

8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

We'll meet at Wiley Slough in the lot closer to the Skagit River and start with a look around this headquarters unit of Skagit Wildlife Area for ducks, possibly raptors, and early returning migrants from

the south. Then we'll head to Maynard Axelson's for an up-close look at a wide variety of North American waterfowl species and others from far afield. If time permits, we'll check Hayton Snow Goose Reserve, Jensen access, and other Fir Islands sites. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, bird book, and a scope if you have one. (Driving directions to the meeting spot:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife/areas/skagit/Headquarters%20Skagit>)

Leader: Tim Manns, 360-336-8753;

bctm@fidalgo.net

Discover Pass required for parking



Northwest Birding Festival

**Please join us March 13 - 16, 2014 for the
12th Annual Wings Over Water Northwest
Birding Festival**

Free Admission

**All events are free except for
nature tours and cruises.**

Festival Location:

**I-5 Exit 275, Blaine Middle School
Cafeteria,
975 H St Blaine WA**

12th Annual 2014 WOW Festivities

Featured Speakers 2014

Paul Bannick is an award-winning wildlife photographer specializing in the natural history of North America with a focus on birds and habitat.

Noah Stryker is Associate Editor of Birding magazine and is a well known writer and "bird man."



Introducing Merlin Bird ID: A New Kind of Birding App

From Cornell Lab eNews, January 2014

Information overload is the bane of the beginning bird watcher—as anyone knows who has ever flipped through 40 species of sparrows in a field guide. What if an app could quickly tell you which birds are most likely based on your location, date, and a brief description? Not just which birds theoretically could occur near you, but which birds are actually reported most often by other birders. That's what Merlin Bird ID does. **And it's free**—because we want to make bird watching easier for everyone.

Merlin Bird ID covers 285 of the most common birds of North America (with more on the way). In addition to help with ID, it contains expert tips, more than 1,400 gorgeous photos, and sounds for each species. It's available now for iPhone and other iOS7 devices, and it's coming soon for Android.

Birding makes big tracks in 2013 and bags young fans

Terry Byrne, USA TODAY 1:15 p.m. EST January 4, 2014

Birding is the perfect hobby to share in the 21st century.

Today's apps put citizen science — and birds — in the palm of your hand.

For those who missed the big news in the bird world last week: The man considered the North American birding champion for nearly three decades, who was immortalized in the 2011 Hollywood movie *The Big Year*, has probably been toppled off his roost.

In birding circles, being the top lister is like winning the Masters.

It's safe to say the feat won't ruffle the feathers of longtime top birder Sandy Komito, who set a record in 1987 by scoping out 721 birds in one calendar year in an area defined by the American Birding Association — then broke his own record in 1998 with 748.

"Birders are competitive — but only with themselves, and (they) will go out of their way to help a fellow birder find birds," says the new provisional champ, Neil Hayward, 40, who identified his 750th bird of the year, a great skua off the coast of Cape Hatteras, N.C., on Dec. 28. He says Komito, 82, "gave me lots of advice and said he hoped he'd still be alive when someone broke his record. ... No one was quite expecting it to happen this year, though."

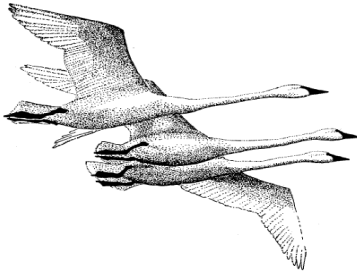
If you think birding — formerly known as bird-watching — seems like an obscure pastime, think again.

About 85 million Americans enjoy observing, photographing or feeding wild birds. Birding ranks 15th on a list of the most popular outdoor activities, just below bicycling and beach bumming, according to the most recent National Survey on Recreation and the Environment by the USDA's Forest Service. About 18 million are serious enough to take trips exclusively to commune with other birders or count birds by sight or sound, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. Some designate Big Days — Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Team Sapsucker set a continental **record of identifying 294** on April 25 — or Biggest Weeks, and a few die-hard birders embark on what they call Big Years, competitions to spot as many species as they can within a certain territory.

"It's one of those rewarding activities like exercising or reading or tending a garden ... that are just universally acknowledged as good things to do," says Jeff Gordon, president of the ABA. "And birding is so quick and portable, you can go birding on your lunch break from an office downtown or waiting outside the school to pick up your kid. Birds are everywhere."



SKAGIT AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1101
MOUNT VERNON WA 98273



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

March 2014 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Feb. 23	Feb. 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 26 Hiking: Lily Lizard Lakes Loop	Feb. 27	Feb. 28	1 Field Trip: Samish Flats and Beyond
2	3	4 SAS Board Meeting: 7:00 PM	5 Hiking: Tommy Thompson Trail	6	7	8 Field Trip: Deception Pass State Park
9	10	11 General Meeting: Social 7:00 PM/ Meeting 7:30 PM	12 Hiking: Sugar Cube & Whistle Lake	13	14	15 Deadline SAS April Flyer <hr/> Wings Over Water Fest - Blaine, WA
16	17	18	19 Hiking: Goose Rock Perimeter	20	21	22 Field Trip: Upper Skagit Valley
23	24	25	26 Hiking: Around Mt. Erie Mt. Erie Base Hike	27	28	29
30 Field Trip: Fir Island Sites & Maynard Axelson's Waterfowl Collection	31	April 1	April 2 Hiking: Lookout Mountain Preserve	April 3	April 4	April 5

Visit the Skagit Audubon Society Website at www.skagitaudubon.org The Skagit Flyer is printed on recycled paper

